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IMMEDIATE AND SECRET

520876

Elliot
24/6

23/6/86

Dictated in Dublin

I had a phone call from the Secretariat in Belfast asking me to contact Elliot. I spoke to Elliot at about 10.15 am.

Elliot said King had been reading the weekend press and following the other media coverage of the Stalker problem. King had personally instructed him to talk to me to convey the following message on King's behalf. Elliot mentioned that his instructions were to "speak robustly".

King is "very seriously" concerned at the nature of comment that is being attributed directly or indirectly to the Government in Dublin, particularly insofar as it refers to what he regards as "privileged" communication "between the two sides". He believes that "lasting damage" could be done to the relationship in the Conference by what is happening.

King has asked Elliot to convey a very sincere request that, in the interests of both sides, Dublin should now "cool it".

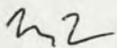
Elliot also said he was concerned about references to exchanges within the Secretariat mentioned by Ms. Kennedy in the Sunday Press. So far as he knew there was no truth in these references.

I reminded Elliot that the Irish Government had a legitimate interest in this affair for several reasons. I said I was sure that our overwhelming concern now was that the matter be cleared up quickly.

I said I knew for a fact that my Minister had sought to "cool it" with his own colleagues. Elliot said he would mention this point to King.

In conclusion, Elliot, who was very restrained in his manner of presentation, said that he had conveyed his instructions in terms that were very mild indeed. I said I took note of that.

Comment: I think King has a very fair point and I have personally found the "insider" reports of Conference exchanges between King and the Minister and within the Secretariat in the weekend media to be very shortsighted in terms of our interests within the Conference, and particularly in terms of our concern for matters during the marching season which should "loom" larger than any other issue at this time. It seems to me that we got our "pound of flesh" from Nick Scott's statement of apology in the Commons on Thursday night. It further seems to me that the issue is now a huge "stink" in British politics and that we can publicly leave it their responsibility, confident that it will continue to exert pressure on the British Government. On the other hand I believe we should continue to press it strongly in private so that we might, for example, gain on issues like Police Complaints Procedures. Pressing it in public with references to advantages secured in private conferences between Ministers and in the Secretariat makes it more, not less, difficult for the British to be seen to make the concessions that we really want and moreover creates problems in the attitude of those responsible for protecting Catholics during the marching season.


M.J. Lillis
23 June, 1986

cc: Taoiseach
Tanaiste
Minister
Minister for Justice
Attorney General
Secretary
Eamon O Tuathail
Peter Prendergast